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# Lapworth Museum wins heritage lottery grant and seeks volunteers to help shape its redevelopment

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The Lapworth Museum of Geology at the University of Birmingham has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund Development grant of £130,000 to progress plans to apply for a full grant for a major redevelopment project to create a significantly improved visitor experience and widen its access to young people, the public, and schools.

Local volunteers are also needed to help shape and inform the content, themes and potential layout of the museum to ensure it meets the expectations of a diverse potential audience. This could include taking part in focus groups, becoming a member of a volunteer advisory group, or helping with specific tasks as the project develops.

## Get involved

- Register as a volunteer
- **Sign up for our newsletter (/facilities/lapworth-museum/about/register-updates.aspx)**

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The Museum contains the largest and finest geological collection in the West Midlands region and dates back to 1880 and the foundation of Mason College, the forerunner of the University of Birmingham.

Its collections of over 250,000 objects includes significant material from many influential geologists, scientists and collectors of the 19th and early 20th centuries, encompassing geological pioneer Charles Lapworth's collection, Fred Shotton's top secret work for the D-Day landings, as well as Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery's geology collection which includes Matthew Boulton's mineral collection,

It houses some of the finest fossils from the region, recording intervals when Central England was submerged beneath warm tropical seas or covered in coal forests followed by arid desert conditions, whilst the remains of woolly mammoths provide a glimpse of life during the Ice Age. The mineral and gem collections, some of which date back to the 18th century, contain over 15,000 specimens from all over the world with rare, colourful and exquisite crystal forms.

A video walkthrough of the redeveloped museum

The proposal for redevelopment will retain the museum's original features and display cases, as well as its Edwardian interior, however these will be juxtaposed with a state-of-the-art museum experience, which will be interactive and tactile, with modern technology for a more enhanced and rewarding visit.

Open days will be held for people interested in volunteering to provide some background to the museum, its collections, this exciting project, and what kind of commitment is required.

Learning resources will also enable schools to find out about a range of topical geological and environmental issues in the form of a web-based environmental science knowledge hub, while new 'discovery labs' will provide unique access to current research at the University, focussing on environmental change, the history of life, and the earth's resources.

**Professor Malcolm Press**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Life and Environmental Sciences, said: *'The redeveloped museum will provide an outstanding visitor experience with accessible and engaging exhibitions and activities that will benefit the museum's public and university audiences and will be a unique resource for the region and nationally.'*

**Jon Clatworthy**, Director of the Lapworth Museum, said: *'We are very proud of the museum's heritage and are keen to maintain the Edwardian feel and features, but want to bring it into the 21st century by offering better access, more space for school children to be able to come and learn about geology, and a more interactive experience so our visitors can get as much as possible out of their visit to the Lapworth.'*

**Reyhan King**, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands said: *'HLF is delighted to offer initial support for this project that will both restore the University of Birmingham's Edwardian displays and expand the visitor experience to make it worthy of the 21st century. From woolly mammoths to exquisite gems, the Lapworth will provide much needed further opportunities for people in the region to explore natural history collections.'*

Even with generous support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and University investment, the museum will not realise its ambitious plans without public support for the project, so an additional £700,000 needs to be raised as part of the University's Circles of Influence fundraising campaign. Former geology student, Keith Palmer, is leading the appeal and is making a personal donation of £250,000 - now the museum needs additional supporters to help find the balance. Anyone wishing to make a donation to support the opening of the new museum, can contact Laura Fairbanks on +44 (0)121 414 8894 or at **l.fairbanks@bham.ac.uk (mailto:l.clark.1@bham.ac.uk)**

If you are interested in being involved in the shaping of the development project and to take part in the focus groups, please register your details on our volunteers form.

If you would simply like to be kept updated about the project, **please register for a newsletter here (/facilities/lapworth-museum/about/register-updates.aspx)** .

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